

Kathmandu Mission November-December 2009

November 27 2009

Our first meeting is supposed to be on Friday 27th of November at 4 pm on the stunning rooftop of the Valley guesthouse in Boudha, Kathmandu.

In the morning however, one of the team members, Annemarie Schalkwijk, had organised a tour in the Kanti Children's Hospital in Kathmandu for those already present in Kathmandu and interested in the work and effort the Hospital invests to give maximum health care and support to the needing children of Nepal.

We are met by Bishop Joshi, the financial manager of the Hospital. He gives an elaborate lecture about the status of the Hospital, the number of children being taken care of on the different sections. He specifically emphasizes on the budget and structure, divided in governmental support and national and international sponsoring. He is very keen on giving us some written proof of his achievements. However, we don't need any proof, convinced already by his passionate way of talking about his work, the children and the achievements of the Hospital.



An extensive tour follows through the Hospital, passing by Oncology, Cardiology, IC and Neonatology. We are impressed by the cleanliness of the building, the peacefulness of the patients and their families, all sitting around their beds, and it's staff and the currently available equipment being exposed and used. Although Rachel, IC nurse team member, had to come to the IC head nurse's rescue right away, as there was a malfunction of one of the donated German machines. An important piece seemed to be missing!

One child, having Hepatic Encephalopathy dies, while we are standing in the IC talking to the head nurse. The child's name, Rabindra Mandal, as written on the board when we walked in, has been wiped out when we leave the IC room. What really impresses me is the contained reaction of the parents. They close the curtain around her bed.

The tour in the Kanti Children's Hospital was the perfect start of the Mission that still had to officially get underway. It gives an insight in all the hard work and efforts that are locally being made, besides the work that

MCC, C.H.A.N.C.E. for Nepal, Bal-Balika Nepal and so many other institutions and organizations are doing for the ill and needing children of Nepal.

At 4 pm we gather on the rooftop, anxious to get to know the rest of the team. As a multi-national mission, we did not have the opportunities to meet before hand.

So it **IS** a special team this year, consisting of 3 nationalities, the spoken languages being German and English. Ines, pediatrician and head of the Slotervaart Pediatric Division, our team leader and founder of MCC and Susanne from Bal-Balika Nepal, working for a multinational, always do the Kathmandu mission together.

Susanne brings along a large German delegation, Dirk, her husband, a corporate adviser and Stefan, a doctor working in the Chemical industries. Further more Barbara, a pediatrician from Munich, Marika, our weight and height expert and Stephanie, a restaurateur of paintings and soon to be our 'Soap Chick on a Mission'.

Then there is Barbara, our distinguished guest from England, who gets all the warm welcomes, credits and honour she deserves, founder of the C.H.A.N.C.E. for Nepal and doing lots of good work for different schools and institutions in the region.



The Dutch delegation consists of Rachel, a frequent team member of MCC, working on the IC of the AMC in Amsterdam. Annemarie, a GP, who has been working in the Kanti Children's Hospital for several months last year and her partner Paul, Project manager, consultant photographer, entertainer and among many other things new member of the board of MCC. Marianne, a retired pediatrician, who was in Kenya with MCC in springtime and fortunately recovered from an illness she caught up after being there. We are happy to have her on the team again.

Then there are Ria, physiotherapist and daughter Eva, student in psychology, on their way from Bangladesh, where they worked with handicapped children for 2 months, to Baktapur, where they are working at Swarga for another 2

months. Last, there is me, an independent photographer from Amsterdam.

At the Garden next door we enjoy our first meal together. Well together... The Germans still sitting on the far end of the table and the Dutch on the other end with Barbara in the middle. It took a few days to mingle and mix, but at the end an English-German-Dutch team spirit was born.

28 November 2009

Our first checking day, an easy slow start, but for many of us an impressive one, with a first visit to the Swarga Orphanage.

We put medication boxes and bags on the roof of the bus. As we are with a group of 15, we hardly fit in the bus, that Prakash provided for us with his usual passion and dedication.

First we head for the Orphan Children Rescue Centre to check 26 children. MCC has been coming here for some years now and Ines is very happy with the progress the orphanage is making. The children were diagnosed to be more healthy. The building is expanding with each year a new floor, they are growing their own vegetables in the garden and the hygienic conditions are considered more and more seriously.

Stephanie did her first Soap Mission today and it turns out to be a perfect match. She starts buying soap in the village and children rather choose a bar of soap than some sticker or a pen as a present, convinced as they are by Stephanie's passionate lecture about soap and hygienics.

We drive to Swarga, an orphanage for disabled children, in Baktapur afterwards, and are immediately bewildered by the rough entrance. How can any one, let alone a disabled person,



enter the premises, with such a rocky entrance? We hear that 2 Dutch volunteers will soon start working on it. Thank you volunteers! We enter a HOME, with capitals. It is a warm place, the children are happy and the care they give each

other is remarkable and touching. We install our carousel in the garden and the children seem to enjoy passing the stations by them selves. The children are supporting each other and some are just mesmerized by the stethoscope and the sound of their own heartbeat.

We are all silenced by this special place with its extraordinary inhabitants and staff members. One boy, I think age 16, with burns all over his body and face is doing the registration. He enjoys being part of the checking process, growing in his role and feeling good about his contribution and himself. Later on at our everyday

evaluation at 9 pm, we decide that the help of students will be very useful during the checks. The rest of the week we'll assign many older children to register and translate or fill up other useful assignments.

The afternoon and evening is filled with massages, dinners and our evaluation meeting. Next day will be different, much more hectic and we all look forward to it.

Sunday 29 November

Today we leave at 7.30 am after a lovely breakfast served by the friendly staff of the Valley Guesthouse.

On the way to The Hattiban Clinic in the Valley, we pick up Prami, who organized the checks and mobilized 3 villages to join us in the Clinic. The journey is beautiful and we hope



the weather will be fair, so we can enjoy a Mount Everest view. Apart from the clouds it turns out to be another beautiful, but full day. We install our stations on 2 separate floors in the building. Doctors up and the rest down, as the first rows of children gather outside. We start slowly, but soon the queue outside is growing and some congestion on the stairs is making the building cramped with children.

We have a lovely lunch on the roof, well prepared and taken care off by Prami. We check 183 children today, from 3 different villages. For the doctors it was kind of stressful, as we did not know how many children would show up on a Sunday and on what time schedule. Downstairs everything went smoothly though and we finished at about 3 o'clock.

The group splits up and some go home, others have dinner at the Third Eye and Fire and Ice in Thamel.

At the evaluation meeting some team members are a bit stressed out by the day, the chaotic cramped situation in the Clinic and by the long non-stop checking hours. Also some stations lacked local interpreters and the English of the children was sometimes poor. Tomorrow we'll focus on flow and interpreters.

Monday 30 November

Again to the Hattiban Clinic where we check 138 kids. It is much better structured, as registration only allows a certain amount of children in at the time. We manage to get some translators, among which the driver Del, some students and locals. This makes working much easier than yesterday. We are presented with a farewell ceremony, with blessed shawls and presents. They were very grateful that we came to this close community of villages, where the Clinic provides its services.

On the way back some of us have a drop of in Thamel for shopping and dinner. Others return home for a nice massage or a walk around the Stupa.

Tuesday 1 December



Barbara Datson has previously introduced MCC to the principal Rev. Raju Lama Kondan, who is welcoming us today in his Triple Gem School. It's a public Holiday and many children show up accompanied by their parents. That works out really well. The parents absorb the information about hygiene, dental care and nutrition and hopefully that will result in a more frequent and adequate standard of application. It is worth trying to encourage parents to come along more often during future checks.

At 12 pm we have checked already 130 children without too much effort, such apart from the stations that were on the sunny side of the schoolyard. After lunch they move to the shade, which makes working easier. We finish our day at about 200 checks. On our way home some go to Thamel again, others go to relax in Boudha.

Wednesday December 2 2009

I start at 6 am at a temple around the Stupa, just like Ines does every day and other team members come along. Just sitting there for 20 minutes, a perfect start of the day.

Our second day at the Triple Gem School. We check another 200 children and everything goes smooth and easy. We have some great help from students, at the Pharmacy and Health Promotion.

After packing our equipment and medication, we are offered a touching farewell ceremony with presents, speeches and dancing. When we drive away from the premises, the boarding children are at the gate, asking if we will be back next year. We surely do hope so.

In Boudha a group decides to visit the Burning Gahts near The Pashupatinath Temple. A beautiful site, being full moon and public Holiday makes it a very special experience.



Thursday December 3 2009

Today we visit The Amar Johti School In Tokha. It's our first visit and we feel immediately that it is a different school than the other ones visited this week.

They sprinkle the garden, so we will not be bothered by any dust. They organize tables in the yard for us and there is even a welcoming banner above the entrance, like the one at Triple Gem, thanking Barbara Datson & Co. Despite this perfect set up, the children and their parents seem not to be familiar to any form of care from local or foreign organisations. They are pushing in the queue, the Namaste is little used and the atmosphere appears a little harsh. As Stefan mentions during evaluation later, these are the children we are here for. The chaos and sometimes awkward attitude is probably generated by ignorance of the procedure more than anything else. The overall outcome of the checks is clearly different compared to the Triple Gem and other places we've been.

However, I have a great talk with 15 and 16 year olds upstairs, and they are extremely outspoken, funny and sharp. All children from the same school.



We check 200 children in less than 2 hours, just before running out of cuvettes and other materials. We are offered a wonderful lunch and wait for our driver. It takes him almost 2 hours to come and bring us back to Boudha.



The last supper in Senchen. The Dutch delegation, including Barbara will be visiting a small orphanage tomorrow, but for the German delegation it has been their last checking day. Everybody is very satisfied and grateful about the mission, and its outcome. Some are contributing ideas and thoughts about future missions. They formulate new objectives and goals to achieve. The delegations never melted really into one, but we all have been trying very hard. Speaking for my self, taking part in a multi-national mission was an additional incentive. The diversity of the group and the specific and sometimes unusual group dynamics gave an extra dimension to a very special, intense week.

Friday December 4 2009

Just a short walk away from our guesthouse we find Marinka Children Home, a small orphanage for street children. Last but certainly not least, this place and the children steal our hearts. Its warm colours, lovely light building, but especially the intense happy smiles of the children remain

in our memory engraved, still now. We execute a quick check in the kitchen.

The children seem all in good health, clean and good taken care off. As Swarga was the perfect start of the mission, this Home was the perfect closure, of an intense, satisfying and beautiful week. I feel grateful.

Friday afternoon some go to Kopan, others to Patan or stay on the rooftop to rest and read.

In the evening a large group heads for the Dwarika's Hotel and dines with the owner and her mother. There might be a joint venture in the future.



To be continued...

Ada Nieuwendijk, Amsterdam, December 17 2009